



All Round Good Hounds

Puppy Mouthing Notes

It is one of the most common “puppy problems” that we hear and contrary to the belief that it is a puppy and it will grow out of it, this is not the case. A puppy that mouths/bites is an adult dog that mouths/bites. Like in any behaviour adjustment there is hundreds of ways to change behaviour and our principle is “least invasive most affective”. Depending on your puppies temperament as to what methods are best to change behaviour. One of the most common problems when it comes to playing with the puppies is that we don’t create, ourselves, those “play pauses” that are needed to help the puppy settle their excitement levels back down. We tend to play continuously and also mimic the rough and tumble play with the puppies using our hands. When this happens we are encouraging the puppies to not only bite our hands but also very quickly the puppy becomes over excited and starts biting harder. Playing games using toys with the puppies helps to eliminate the biting of hands and to establish a playing game with you, using a toy.

The old school version of yelping similar to what another puppy would do in play to communicate to the puppy that the bite was too hard we find ineffective. Main reason being that there is very few people that can actually mimic correctly the pitch and tone another puppy would do in this scenario. It also sometimes triggers the puppies excitement level more and they either keep going or get worse. You must teach your puppy to be gentle with hands and that mouthing results in unpleasant consequences.

1. Social Isolation – For most puppies they are either biting to get your attention or because they are having a game with you and the game has gone on for too long so they are over excited. Once a puppy has bitten too hard or biting for attention being able to verbally correct them, ie a deep growly voice of “uh uh” and then putting them somewhere for time out and calming down can be effective. Places for time out must be a place that isn’t somewhere where they can have fun and entertain themselves. Ideal places are crates, laundry, bathroom etc. The puppy must remain in there until they have calmed down and quiet and then can be released again but without any interaction from you at this stage.
2. Dencorub or bitter apple tastes horrible but is safe for dogs. Rubbing these into your hands makes your hands an unpleasant taste and therefore less desirable.
3. Paring a garden mister with your verbal correction can also be effective for those persistent mouthers . Like paring our verbal markers with food we are conditioning the verbal corrector with something unpleasant and making our verbal corrector stronger. Once paired we can and most of the time able to faze out the actual use of the sprayer as the puppy then tends to listen to the verbal correction. Once we have corrected the puppy we then need to be able to transfer the biting on to something we are happy for the puppy to bite. Timing is important in this scenario as we want to make it clear to the puppy that our hands are not for biting but the toy can be played with. Waiting at least 5 seconds before producing the toy helps to clarify this to the puppy.